

In the claims:

Claims 1-39 cancelled.

40. (currently amended) ~~A screw connection element as defined in Claim 32~~A screw connection element, comprising an outer threaded portion; sealing means disposed in threads of said outer threaded portion; a protective covering surrounding said outer threaded portion for retaining said sealing means in said threads and composed of a flexible material; a thread situated at a front end of said outer threaded portion and free of said sealing means, wherein said protective covering is connected in a form-fitting manner to said thread in an axial direction of said outer threaded portion, wherein said sealing means is enriched with a material selected from the group consisting of a material which restricts a growth of germs, a material which restricts a growth of bacteria, a material which destroys germs and bacteria, and a combination thereof.

41. (previously presented) A screw connection element as defined in Claim 40, wherein said material comprises a heavy metal.

42. (previously presented) A screw connection element, comprising an outer threaded portion; sealing means disposed in threads of said outer threaded portion; a protective covering which surrounds said outer

threaded portion for retaining said sealing means in said threads and composed of a flexible material, said protective covering including an inner part with an inner wall which is adapted to said outer threaded portion, an outer part which surrounds said inner part and said sealing means disposed between said inner and outer parts, wherein said inner and outer parts are connected to each other in a form-fitting manner at their front ends in an axial direction of said outer threaded portion.

43. (previously presented) A screw connection element as defined in Claim 42, wherein said form-fitting connection between said inner part and said outer part is configured by said outer part deformed at the front end so that it enters into a thread of said inner part, while said thread of said inner part is free of said sealing means.

44. (previously presented) A screw connection element as defined in Claim 42, wherein said inner part and said outer part are provided at their rear ends with mounting flanges for mutual connection.

45. (previously presented) A screw connection element as defined in Claim 44, wherein said sealing means include hemp fibers.

46. (previously presented) A screw connection element as defined in Claim 34, wherein said sealing means is enriched with a material selected from the group consisting of a material which restricts a growth of germs, a material which restricts a growth of bacteria, a material which destroys germs and bacteria, and a combination thereof.

47. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element, provided with an outer threaded portion for receiving a sealing means, the protective covering comprising a sheath for screwing onto the outer threaded portion and containing an inner part with an inner wall having an inner diameter substantially corresponding to an outer diameter of the outer threaded portion, and outer part surrounding said inner part and said sealing means between said inner and said outer part, wherein said inner part and said outer part are connected to each other in a form-fitting manner at their front ends, in an axial direction of said outer threaded portion.

48. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein said form-fitting connection between said inner part and said outer part is configured as a deformed portion of said outer part at the front end such that it enters into a thread of said inner part, while said thread of said inner part is free of said sealing means.

49. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein said inner part and said outer part are provided at said rear end with mounting flanges for mutual connection.

50. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein said sealing means is composed of a material selected from the group consisting of a long fibrous material and a thread-shaped material.

51. (previously presented) A screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein said sealing means include hemp fibers.

52. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein a part selected from the group consisting of said inner part, said outer part, and both contains protein-containing fibers.

53. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein a part selected from the group consisting of said inner part, said outer part and both contains cellulose.

54. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein a part selected from the group consisting of said inner part, said outer part and both contains mineral components.

55. (previously presented) A protective covering for a screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein a part selected from the group consisting of said inner part, said outer part and both contains respectively at least one polymer.

56. (previously presented) A screw connection element as defined in Claim 47, wherein said sealing means is enriched with a material selected from the group consisting of a material which restricts a growth of germs, a material which restricts a growth of bacteria, a material which destroys germs and bacteria, and a combination thereof.